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22 September 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with Mr. Robert Miller, Chief,
Vietnam Working Group, Department of
State

TIME: 1430 - 1500, 22 September 1965

PLACE: Mr. Miller's Office (Room 5207, New
State)

PERSONS PRESENT: Mr. Robert Miller
[redacted]
Mr. George A. Carver, Jr.

1. This meeting was arranged at my request to provide an opportunity for an exchange of views to facilitate future liaison contacts between the Vietnamese Affairs Staff and working-level elements of the Department of State charged with responsibility for Vietnamese affairs.

2. Without going into excessive detail or discussing matters of purely internal Agency concern, I briefly outlined the mission, structure, and objectives of the office of the Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs and his Vietnamese Affairs Staff. Mr. Miller wanted to know whether we had a command function. I replied that we did not; that we were a staff element created to serve the Director both in his capacity as operating head of CIA and as the Director of Central Intelligence. Mr. Miller then inquired how our function was related to or affected by Mr. Colby's responsibilities as Chief

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of the Far East Division. He was particularly interested in the question of who had authority to provide Agency coordination on joint correspondence. (His questions were prompted by a recent Unger Committee meeting, attended by [] which had generated a joint message to the field that he had sent to [] for Agency coordination, though he was told later that it should have been sent to Mr. Colby.)

3. I replied that, as head of our operating division for the Far East, Mr. Colby constituted the normal and proper command channel and that Agency communications with the field were handled through his office. Although we wished to be aware of all correspondence to and from Saigon and Washington, we had neither the desire nor the authority to impose ourselves in the communications channel or to assume coordinating or releasing responsibilities which properly remain with Mr. Colby's division.

4. During the course of the conversation, I introduced []

[] would now be working on the Vietnamese Affairs staff. The three of us engaged in some discussion of current Montagnard problems. [] outlined the background of the respective responsibilities and relationships between []

5. Mr. Miller outlined for us the State Department's present Vietnam organization. The Vietnam Working Group, of which he is the head, was an outgrowth of the old Forrestal Interagency Task Force. Forrestal had been a Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and not a subordinate of the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. During the Forrestal-Sullivan era, only a vestige of the old Vietnam Desk had remained in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. This anomalous situation had been in some measure bureaucratically regularized.

6. The Vietnam Working Group was now rather more than a desk and rather less than an office. Normally, Mr. Miller reported

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to Assistant Secretary Bundy through Ambassador Unger, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. In practice, though there was no formal statement of these responsibilities, Ambassador Unger has supervisory charge over all Southeast Asian activities. One of the two other Deputy Assistant Secretaries (Ambassador Berger) looks after all other Far East matters, and another (Mr. Barnett) is primarily concerned with economic activities. Ambassador Unger is also the Chairman of the Inter-Agency Vietnam Coordinating Committee on which Mr. Miller sits, in effect, as a Department of State representative.

7. The Working Group, actually, is very small. At present, in addition to himself, Mr. Miller has only three officers: Mr. George Roberts who concerns himself primarily with third-country political matters affecting Vietnam (e. g., Vietnamese ambassadorial representation abroad); Mr. John Helble, former Consul in Hue, who looks after internal political matters; and Mr. Gilbert Kenney who follows economic affairs and does most of the working-level ~~liaison~~ with AID. Mr. Miller hopes to get a fairly junior FSO from Laos to take over much of Mr. Roberts' routine work so that Mr. Roberts can devote his attention to broader problems and become, in effect, Mr. Miller's deputy.

8. In addition to the VNWG per se, some work on Vietnam was done by the Far East Regional Office headed by Miss Ruth Bacon. There is also a considerable amount of work done on third-country negotiation initiatives by other components of the Department. Mr. Miller is kept informed on all activity in this sphere but simply does not have the staff to play any command role in this area.

9. Mr. Miller had to leave to attend an Unger Committee meeting at 1500. In departing, he expressed his appreciation for our session, asked us to call him or his staff on any matters of common interest, and assured us that he would keep in close touch and keep us informed of the Department's thinking and activities.

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GEORGE A. CARVER, JR.
Vietnamese Affairs Staff

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